

# A Banker in the Exam Room? The Growing Resistance to Medicare Privatization

*Featuring Ed Weisbart, MD*



## IN THIS EPISODE

**What does it mean to “privatize” Medicare? What’s ACO-Reach? Why does it matter? Who’s for it, who’s against it, and why?** Join host **Brenda Gazzar** and **Ed Weisbart, MD**, a retired family physician, former chief medical officer of Express Scripts and a national board member of Physicians for a National Health Program to get the low-down. Dr. Weisbart shines a revealing light on an issue that will impact the healthcare experience of almost every American aged 65 or older - *the ongoing effort to give away Medicare to private, for-profit investors.* **Should health care be “just another way” for investors and shareholders to make money? Is a for-profit Fire Department just around the corner?**

## SHOW NOTES

### WE DISCUSS

*Could you briefly describe this latest threat to traditional Medicare?*

In 2020, the Trump administration launched a new experiment to privatize traditional Medicare, turning everybody who is in traditional Medicare today over to a new entity that is invested in by Wall Street – run by the for-profit (healthcare) industry and...most able to make money by reducing how much care, how much people get. – *Ed Weisbart, MD*

## *How many Medicare beneficiaries will be affected?*

“Medicare has announced that they plan to have 100% of people pulled out of traditional Medicare and pushed into one of these new programs by the year 2030. Technically, they're still in traditional Medicare and can still go to any doctor that accepts traditional Medicare, but realistically, there's now a for-profit entity that's now focused on making profits rather than maximizing your health. I don't want that involved in my health care.” – *Ed Weisbart, MD*

## *How would privatization impact Medicare costs and patient care?*

“...traditional Medicare spends 98% out of 100% of the money they get...on health care and not on overhead or profit. The insurance industry spends more like 85% and keeps 15% for overhead and profit [from Medicare Advantage plans]. Whereas these new organizations [ACO Reach]...are allowed to spend as little as 60% on health care and keep 40% for overhead and profits. – *Ed Weisbart, MD*

## *What can we the people do about this?*

“First is, learn more. There's a lot of good high-level and in-depth information, if you go to our organization, **Physicians for a National Health Program** or [pnhp.org](http://pnhp.org).

...The second thing is, when you go there, sign the petition...Ask any organization you're part of to sign the organizational petition, which is also on the website.

...Then the third thing is, call your member of Congress and just tell them, ‘Hey, I want you to know I've learned about the Reach program. I've heard about your trying to privatize Medicare. I've heard about these DCEs and I want you to stop it. I want you to become a Medicare protector, not a Medicare assaulter... and I'll know if you do that and I'll vote against you if you do that.’ – *Ed Weisbart, MD*

# Helpful Links

[DCE's: Handing Traditional Medicare to Wall Street](#), *Physicians for a National Health Program*

[Medicare Direct Contracting: A Threat to Seniors and to Medicare's Future](#)  
*Oral Testimony to the U.S. Senate by Dr. Susan Rogers, President, Physicians for a National Health Program*

[CMS redesigns controversial Medicare direct contracting model](#),  
*Healthcare Dive*

[CMS Dumps DCEs ... In Name Only](#), *James G. Kahn, MD, MPH, Health Justice Monitor*

[House progressives push for CMS to end newly rebranded ACO REACH model](#), *Fierce Healthcare*

# Episode Transcript

Read the full [episode transcript](#).

# Guest Biography

Ed Weisbart, MD, is a national board member of [Physicians for a National Health Program](#) and health policy advisor for [Code WACK!](#) He practiced family medicine for 20 years at Rush Medical Center in Chicago and spent seven years as chief medical officer of Express Scripts until retiring in 2010 to devote his time to advocating for healthcare justice. He is an author and popular speaker about single-payer health care, the ongoing attacks on today's Medicare program, and how to find common ground across political chasms.

# Get Involved / Take Action

[Join Physicians for a National Health Program](#) (PNHP) *to support a national campaign to improve and expand Improved Medicare to all U.S. residents.*

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[Join Healthy California Now](#) *- a coalition working toward a California single-payer system. Individual and organizational memberships available.*

[Join Health Care for All California](#) *to keep up with local actions to support California single-payer health care.*